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### **Perspectives on Utilising Community Land Trusts as a vehicle for Affordable Housing Provision**

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#### Introduction

Lack of affordable housing is recognised as a problem in most urban and rural areas in the United Kingdom today. It is one of the issues that gives rise to social exclusion of disadvantaged individuals and can contribute to weakening of community cohesion overall within a local community, mainly through people leaving to seek housing elsewhere. Arthurson, K and Jacobs, K (2003) note the concept of social exclusion is a difficult one, as cause and effect of social exclusion are almost impossible to evaluate clearly. The concept does, however, highlight the relativity of the phenomenon as exclusion implies there is something to be excluded from – in this case access to local housing that does not consume an unreasonable proportion of income. There are clearly degrees of social exclusion as Somerville, P (1998) states, expanding to make the point that some may be excluded from rented housing as well as ownership and some may be excluded only from ownership. Fundamentally Somerville puts the case that the effect of exclusion is to deny certain social groups or individuals control over their daily lives, or impairs enjoyment of their wider citizenship rights.

Although much of the community cohesion literature relates to race issues, the affordable housing issue is also a central component of the cohesion agenda. This is clear from the research on community cohesion and housing commissioned and published by the Housing Corporation and the Chartered Institute of Housing (Perry, J and Blackaby, B 2007). Social cohesion is recognised by the government in the national indicator sets (DCLG, 2007) which underpin Local Authority Agreements. Of 198 indicator sets two are social cohesion measures. The first cohesion measure relates to the percentage of people who think their local area is one where people from different backgrounds get on well, and the second relates to the percentage of people who feel they belong to their local area. Without suitable housing in an area, a sense of belonging is unlikely, and there may be resentment by those who cannot afford housing towards those who can afford it.

This paper examines the role of Community Land Trusts (CLT's) as one of the possible approaches that may help to address lack of affordable housing, using two case studies (one urban and one rural) in NE England. There are many possible definitions of affordable housing and various ways of carrying out housing needs surveys but these will not be explored in this paper. Planning Policy Statement 3(2006) on Housing and Planning includes both social rented and intermediate (including shared equity) as affordable and for the purposes of this paper this general definition will apply. In the absence of recent local housing needs surveys local perceptions will largely be relied on to confirm the nature of the affordable housing problem in each of the case study areas. In both case study areas new housing needs

surveys will be carried out by, or on behalf of, the local Councils in the near future. The existing surveys are currently around four years old and cannot be relied on due to rapid market changes.

A statutory definition of CLT's is currently emerging in England (Community Finance Solutions, 2007). The essential elements include ownership and control of land by a local community in perpetuity for the benefit of that community and not for profit. The phrase "in perpetuity" is key and distinguishes this approach from some others as it has the potential to ensure retention of affordability permanently.

Most CLT provision of affordable housing uses some form of shared equity model, but rental models exist as well. With shared equity tenants can build up equity for a future part purchase, but a significant proportion of the equity growth stays with the CLT in order to benefit the next tenants.

The CLT concept is not entirely new but is enjoying a strong revival. Some of the garden cities established around 100 years ago in England, for example Letchworth, embodied much of this and there is a long history of CLT's operating in the USA (Community Finance Solutions, 2006). More recently Scotland has seen considerable activity relating to the concept through the community right to buy enshrined in the Scottish Land Reform Act 2003. This Act facilitates the ability of communities to purchase land in the first instance (through a first right of refusal when land or property becomes available on the open market, provided the community organisation has registered prior interest). The Scottish Land Fund, administered by Communities Scotland and established in 2001, helps to ensure the financial viability of a community owned and controlled asset, by supplying grant funding.

To date England has no dedicated funding body to assist CLTs nor any specific legislation to assist. The Housing Green Paper, 2007 and the Housing and Regeneration Bill, 2007 are both providing encouragement for CLT's, but without any mention of assistance in terms of government funding. The Housing and Regeneration Bill suggests preventing shared equity staircasing to full ownership in some areas, so this would help CLT's in their aim of retaining an equity stake in perpetuity.

Closely related to CLT's, with very similar aims, are Community Development Trusts (CDT's). These have been operating for some time in England, especially in the South West and North East. Some CDT's have secured grant funding through regeneration programmes in urban areas, and more often through various trusts and charitable bodies in rural areas. The difference between Land Trusts and Development Trusts should not be significant, as their aims are so similar. However there is some confusion over the terminology. The fact that government policy and potential legislation, as well as an emerging facilitation fund, refers to Land Trusts and not Development Trusts, underlies this problem.

This paper explores community perceptions of their local affordable housing problem and what form of community organisation might be best placed to tackle this, given the complexities of delivery in a changing policy and legislative context. The paper discusses the process of community decision making, but not the outcomes as that stage has not yet been reached. The case studies used form part of a wider ongoing

study into CLT's in the North of England jointly by Salford and Northumbria Universities. The two case studies considered here are the Ouseburn Valley, an urban village on the edge of Newcastle upon Tyne city centre, and the Northumberland National Park, a large sparsely populated area north west of Newcastle. Both areas have CDT's operating already and both have some experience of community ownership and control of land. Whether or not formation of a CLT, either as part of, in place of or in addition to a CDT would be beneficial or expedient is examined. The potential to partner with a Housing Association (HA) is also examined, as HAs are the main providers of affordable housing with access to funding as well as expertise.

### Method for case studies

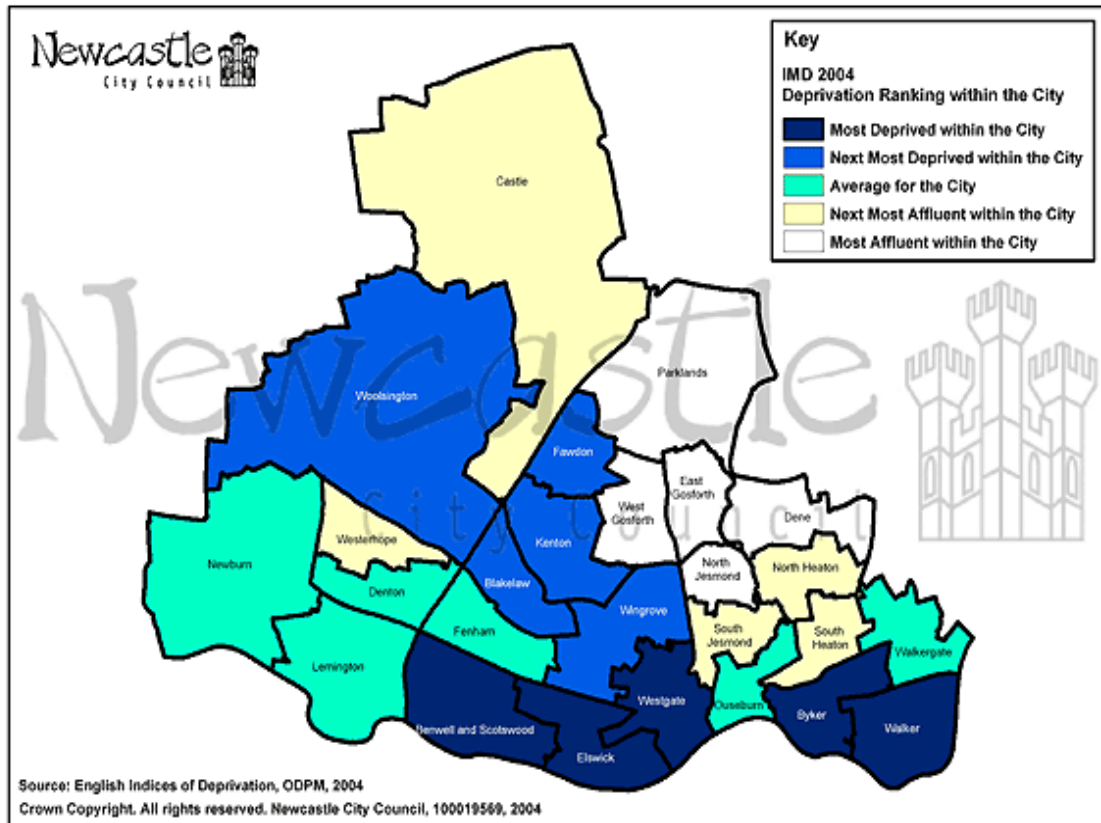
Six key players from government and community bodies were interviewed for each case study. They were selected on the basis of having some prior knowledge or experience of housing or local community issues, as well as being representative of a range of views. The interviewees included planning and housing officers of the local Councils in each case study area, community trust representatives, housing association representatives and local councillors. The interviews were in depth and semi structured. The purpose of the interviews was to establish the perceptions of key players in the community on housing issues in the local area, the extent of knowledge of housing and planning policy and the potential for community delivery of affordable housing, perhaps with a HA partner.

### The Ouseburn Case Study

#### *The area, the housing need and the community response*

The Ouseburn Valley is located close to the city centre with the Ouseburn River, a tributary of the Tyne, at its heart. It is characterised by a varied topography, some significant heritage (largely related to maritime issues), and an emerging mix of lively uses mainly related to arts and culture. The area is covered by Conservation Area status, but has many buildings in need of refurbishment or redevelopment as well as a considerable amount of vacant land. River front development has only recently begun.

Immediately adjacent, to the west of the Ouseburn area, there has been some significant quayside development on the river Tyne in recent years, much of which comprises luxury flats. This in turn has had an impact on land and property prices in the Lower Ouseburn. Gonzalez and Vigor (2004) discuss rapidly changing property markets in the area, and how the local state and the Ouseburn Trust are constrained in promoting innovative affordable housing development in the face of price increases.



*Newcastle City Council ward boundaries, including the Ouseburn ward. The River Tyne runs along the southern boundary of the city.*

Gonzalez and Vigor (2004) also provide a concise history of regeneration initiatives for the area dating back to the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation in the 1980's. It was not until the formation of the Ouseburn Development Trust in 1996, however, that real progress was made in transforming the area from a very run down state. The Trust has been instrumental in achieving many regeneration projects, especially cultural/artistic, using £3m single regeneration budget funding amongst other sources.

In terms of levels of deprivation within Newcastle as a whole the Ouseburn ward is about average. This ward has a population of 7791 and represents 3% of the population of the city. Key socio-economic data include 10.6% unemployment, 92% white, 58% do not own a car, existing dwelling type is dominated by flats at 68% (27% terraced housing) and only 28% owner occupation (40% local authority) (Census 2001)

Bridging Newcastle Gateshead Pathfinder ( the local housing led regeneration body) commissioned a study by Asquith, G (2007) that covered the Ouseburn area and adjacent Byker. It included an online survey and focus group on needs and aspirations of the local people. Some of the findings were that 90% aspired to have home ownership (most with gardens), 74% were considering moving in the next 5 years, 60% would consider shared ownership, over 65% have no dependents, and 43% wanted a live/work unit with 74% needing to consider space requirements for creative

work and 32% needing to work from home. Clearly the artistic community is significant here, and as a sector, artists tend to be less able to afford many types of housing. Although this study is not a formal housing needs survey it has revealed some key up to date information relevant to local housing need.

The need for affordable housing in the area is increasingly being recognised and the Ouseburn Trust is considering the idea of initiating a live-work accommodation project and working with a local Housing Association to achieve this. Given the significant amount of social rented housing together with the nearby top end of market quayside flats plus the desire for more ownership opportunity, the need gap appears to be quite clearly at the intermediate level. Shared ownership in live-work form would appear to be the highest need category locally. The Development Trust is open to further consideration as to whether a Community Land Trust (CLT) might be an appropriate vehicle to help achieve this, and whether a Land Trust could be part of the Development Trust and what, if any, advantages this may confer. However the Trust already has a wide ranging constitution (Ouseburn Trust, 1996) which covers most of the features of a Community Land Trust with the possible exception of a Land Trust being more likely to secure affordable housing in perpetuity (depending on the financial model used) and possibly having better access to any facilitation fund set up for Community Land Trusts. Even the latter two exceptions may well be irrelevant if the eventual legislation relating to CLT's is drawn up to cover most Development Trusts. This appears a possibility from a recent briefing paper by Community Finance Solutions of Salford University for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG, 2008).

The Trust has three paid staff and many volunteers. An Ouseburn Management Board including Trust and City Council members is the main decision making body for the area. There appears to have been some tension between the Trust and Council in the past but a new emphasis giving the Trust more control may change this dynamic in future.

### *The Policy Context*

The Regeneration Strategy for the Lower Ouseburn (NCC, 2003) sets out many objectives but that most pertinent to the CLT issue states "to increase the attractiveness of the Lower Ouseburn valley as a place to live by improving residential quality, affordability and access to jobs and facilities". It notes that a Local Housing Needs Survey may be required. The national Planning for Housing policy (PPS3, 2006) now states that Housing Market Assessments should be carried out in all areas so the emphasis is less on "need" and more on market "demand" so leaving local authorities and communities to interpret this new approach. The interviewees all expressed that a need for affordable housing exists in the area (especially for the local artists), most citing the impact of expensive speculative flat development on the nearby Tyne quayside as a reason, without being able to quantify the problem. The Regeneration Strategy also discusses the importance of a good housing mix and concern is raised about the possibility of gentrification (given the proximity of the new luxury Quayside flats) without intervention to ensure balance. It is suggested that low cost shared ownership, housing co-operatives and live/work units should be included. Live/work units are particularly attractive to artists and IT workers some of whom have irregular hours and/or low incomes and are well represented in the

Ouseburn area. A study by Natalie Bennett (Glasgow School of Art) in 2006 considered the issue of potential demand for such units in the area and the advantages and disadvantages of working from home. The issue of gentrification was studied by James Brockbank in 2006 with specific reference to artistic communities – there has been concern in some areas that care needs to be taken to avoid gentrification in order to retain the characteristic lively mix that is emerging.

The Ouseburn Urban Design Framework (NCC, 2005), the Conservation Area Management Plan for Ouseburn (NCC, 2005), the Ouseburn Valley Urban Landscape Masterplan (NCC, 2007), the Ouseburn Central Masterplan (NCC, 2007) and Interim Housing Guidelines (NCC, 2004) (states 25% of units in new housing developments should be affordable) are additional relevant strategy documents which are testament to the significant attention the City Council has devoted to the area recently. Design issues are now high on the agenda with the recent emergence of these strategies (Conservation Area status was just confirmed in 2000). This presents a significant challenge for any development where affordability is a prime consideration as there are usually more initial costs (although long term value can be enhanced) associated with planning requirements where such policies are in place. On the other hand having these strategies in place means that the Council is actively seeking funding to improve the area environmentally. For example there is a proposal to create a barrage near the mouth of the Ouseburn to improve the water quality so that the river itself is more visually attractive and free from odours, hence enhancing its appeal for adjacent housing development.

All of the above mentioned policy documents are Supplementary Planning Documents to the Development Plan and in practice provide the most useful material due to their detail. Community awareness of the various policies is low, however, (except for the Regeneration Strategy) as indicated through the interview process. This must surely impact on the difficulty the Trust may have in arriving at their own priorities. The interviews with council officers indicated that they would welcome greater clarity between the various policy documents.

Lower awareness still, amongst community representatives, was shown of PPS 3 (2006) and the Housing Green Paper (2007) which encourages CLT formation as a way to address affordability issues. Even the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North East (2005) and the Newcastle Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1998), (to be superseded by the Local Development Framework (LDF) shortly with a 30% affordability target), are relatively little known about in any detail by the community interviewees.

### *Obstacles for decision making*

There appears to be some difficulty for the Trust (confirmed by interview with the Trust Director) in moving forward on priorities and deciding who to partner with to achieve further projects. This is hardly surprising given the complexity of the policy and decision making process. A business plan for the Trust has recently been drafted and most believe live-work units would be appropriate as a way forward, but some businesses are wary of too much residential in proximity to business uses in case noise complaints (from music for example) cause difficulties. From the interviews it could be said there is a consensus on the type of housing that is not wanted and that is

upper end flats, such as those on the nearby Tyne River Quayside. There appears to be a consensus that more family housing and live-work units are needed to secure a good mix of housing type.

There are also decisions to be made on whether the Development Trust should work with a Housing Association and /or the City Council as partnership finance is almost certainly required for all but a very small project. However the desire to be self determining, and perhaps some reservations from past partnership working, makes for some hesitation. Some quite complicated decisions are required on putting financial mechanisms (including a possible CLT) in place as a sound footing for projects now that the Single Regeneration Budget funding is no longer available. Also the City Council focus has moved somewhat to other areas of the City, albeit that a City Council regeneration team remains located in the area. Although the pathfinder (Bridging Newcastle Gateshead) covers the East part of the Ouseburn area, Council officers interviewed considered that this may not be of much help for community projects as the Pathfinder focus is very much on large scale high profile schemes.

The interviewees were drawn largely from various parts of the Development Trust and the City Council and there was no major division between them. A difference of emphasis was evident however, such as the city council showing some resistance to disposing of its' significant land holdings to the community in the area. This is despite disposal having been done already on one large site in the area recently, at less than "best consideration" (quite properly in line with the Local Government Act 1972) with the Regeneration Strategy and Urban Design Framework as justification.

One Council officer view was that some parts of the Council may not view the idea of the CLT mechanism as useful as it might be seen as "another layer of bureaucracy". Or perhaps it may be seen as taking more power away from the Council. The Councillor interviewed considered that Council land should be held for "good financial management" and not power, so it cannot be given to the community without the wider picture for the Council finances in mind. This does not preclude the Council disposing of land to the community for CLT purposes, but it may limit it. As the Council is a significant land owner in the area the potential for the Trust to gain more control of land to further its aims in the longer term may be small. However emerging government thinking in the form of the Quirk Review (2007) on disposal of public assets may encourage Councils to be more flexible in future and consider social benefit more as well as monetary return.

The concerns indicated in the interviews with the Ouseburn community and officials reflect some of the findings in a report by Kitt and Kendrick (2006) on partnership working in the Ouseburn. These include the need for more transparent decision making structures with less reliance on the City Council, as well as improved communication and more accountable targets and a delivery plan.

### *The potential for a Housing Association partner*

In December 2007 Gentoo Housing Association put forward a proposal to the Trust to develop one of the Trust's sites, in partnership with them, for live/work units, including 50 affordable homes. This Housing Association had been interested in the area for some time and it has experience of working in deprived areas for the benefit



of the community. Gentoo would manage the housing and the Trust would manage the workshops. The Trust is still considering this proposal and appears favourably disposed to this particular Housing Association with its community orientation and concern for sustainable development. In the meantime the local planning authority has indicated that there are some problems with the proposal from a planning viewpoint, so the outcome is awaited. The Trust is also taking surveying advice on the terms of the agreement with Gentoo.

Part of the deliberations on this proposal are likely to include whether the partnership between Gentoo and the Trust might be in the form of a CLT, either stand alone or a sub group of the Trust. There would be pragmatic considerations e.g. what would make access to funding easier, as well as power balance, trust and legal considerations. This amounts to a complex set of issues for a community organisation with little professional, legal or financial expertise. The Community Finance Solutions advice unit attached to University of Salford has given some advice to the Trust recently as a follow up to the overall CLT case study work in the north of England referred to earlier. The intention is that this helps the Trust progress with their decision making. There is currently no final outcome.

#### The Northumberland National Park case study

This rural case study, although quite different in terms of the organisations involved, the sparse population and the second home pressure present in the area nonetheless has some common ground with the Ouseburn case. There are existing Development Trusts in the wider area of Northumberland who have successfully implemented projects, including housing (though not in the park) and there has been some discussion within the Northumberland Development Trusts about the possibility of an umbrella CLT for Northumberland including the Park, or perhaps for the Park alone. There is a problem in the Park of defining what the local community is, given the settlement pattern of scattered hamlets and villages and a very small population. Furthermore, like the Ouseburn case, there is no up to date housing needs survey, although there is a recent Housing Market Assessment for Northumberland as a whole (DTZ Pida Consulting, 2006).

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) suggest that, traditionally, a cohesive rural community relates to a rural idyll with a sense of belonging and equal opportunities. However this is frequently contested through reports of poverty and social exclusion (e.g. Phillip and Shucksmith 2003; Milbourne, 2004). Commins (2004) notes that in some rural areas of the UK land and property ownership is the basis for status in the rural community and it accentuates the distinction between the propertied and the property less [*Sic*]. Social pressures on other rural residents to own their own homes, especially in a context of scarce rentable accommodation and rising property values also cloaks struggles to attain a sense of belonging to a local community. Within Northumberland National Park, increases in property prices and second home ownership threaten to undermine the communities' social fabric through a process of social exclusion.

### *The area, the housing need and the community response*

Northumberland National Park was designated as a National Park in 1956. Since its inception the Park's boundary has been carefully drawn to prevent the inclusion of the area's larger settlements. These settlements are located just outside the Park boundary and are underlined in the map below. Consequently, at around 2000 people, Northumberland National Park's population is much smaller than any of the country's other Parks. With an area of 1049 square kilometres the population density is also comparatively very small (only 2 people per square kilometre). Northumberland National Park Authority owns only 2.5 square kilometres of this land; private landowners, the Ministry of Defence and the Forestry Commission constitute the area's largest landowners (as detailed on the Park Authority's website in 2008).



*Map showing Northumberland National Park boundary and the Northumberland District Authority boundaries, with the gateway settlements underlined.*

According to the Park Authority's LDF Core Strategy (2006) two-thirds of the National Park's inhabitants are over the age of 45. Just over 1000 (around 50 %) of the Park's residents are employed (due to a large proportion of elderly), with agriculture, hunting and forestry constituting the largest employment sectors. Unemployment is low; of those considered to be economically active (between the ages of 16 and 74) only 37 (2.6%) are unemployed.

The Park receives few new housing proposals and has seen little development in recent years (only 16 new housing units have been completed since 1996). However, Cumberland and Burns (2004) highlighted a rising demand for affordable housing designed to satisfy local need. The small but steady population increase together with the growth in the number of second homes have resulted in affordability becoming an ever more prominent issue for the Park's indigenous population. Second homes accounted for 6.7 % of the Park's dwellings although some of the settlements exhibited levels as high as 22.2 %. Around half of households in the Park reported a net annual income (after tax and National Insurance) of less than £15,600 (Cumberland and Burns, 2004). The Park's LDF Core Strategy (2006) states that between 2000 and 2005 house prices in the Park had risen, on average, by 185%. As Farrington and Farrington (2005) note, people on low incomes typically do not have choices in residential location, or at least they are likely to be severely constrained, leading to exclusion from some areas. Indeed, there is clear evidence in rural accessibility research (for example, Storey and Brannen, 2000; McQuaid et al., 2003) of links between jobs, housing and accessibility - particularly for young people and jobseekers. Whilst many of the younger generation are simply unable to afford to stay within the Park, it remains a popular retirement area and so an ageing population has emerged. When all of these factors are combined with lack of new development and a decrease in available stock through rising levels of second home ownership, the negative effects on the cohesiveness of the community are apparent.

The Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts and a number of its members have already shown that small scale affordable housing projects can be successfully developed within Northumberland's remote rural settlements. There are currently 19 Community Development Trusts (CDTs) operating within the county of Northumberland, although none of these are situated within the National Park. This is arguably a result of the Park's settlements being of such a small and scattered nature.

Some CDTs interviewed who are considering housing projects within rural Northumberland appear to be open to the idea of operating as a Community Land Trust, although perhaps more sceptical than the Ouseburn Trust interviewees. However, this appeared to be strongly driven by the impression that rebranding could lend itself to increasing the possibility of accessing facilitation funds. It was also widely perceived that CDT's and CLT's were striving for the same goals in the case of housing provision. In some cases such as Allendale's CDT a separate organisation has been created to focus solely on housing provision, whilst on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne the CDT itself has already begun functioning as a CLT. Most of the interviewees in this study consider a new CLT for the National Park a possibility, although some feel the community in the Park is not well enough defined for one umbrella CLT to work. At least three interviewees felt that an overarching CLT would not be able to deal with the variety of community needs (and would thus risk damaging community cohesion), and also that the body could be viewed as replicating

or competing with the existing work of the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts.

As the National Park Authority develops its Local Development Framework there are a number of key considerations to address. The National Park is an expansive area enveloping many settlements which exhibit individual needs and desires. Whether an umbrella CLT could function over such an area remains to be seen within rural Britain. The key question for the Park Authority does not concern the principles underlying CLT's, but rather the scale, governance and levels of involvement over such a large area. As Farrington and Farrington (2005) note, the bottom up approach to accessibility deprivation would be greatly facilitated by greater top down integration. The challenge, if this proposition is to be followed, is to achieve greater integration of accessibility-related policy making at the top (between central government departments), and between the medium and lower levels (local authorities, agencies and communities).

### *Policy Context*

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East refers to the need for more affordable housing in Northumberland's rural districts. Allocation of land for housing and policies relating to percentage of affordable housing are the responsibility of the Local Planning Authorities. PPS 3 supports the regional and local level with acknowledgement of the need for rural affordable housing too.

Three Local Planning Authorities boundaries overlap with the Northumberland National Park boundary - Tynedale, Alnwick and Berwick upon Tweed. The National Park is a Planning Authority but is not a housing authority, so it is the local councils that are ultimately responsible for dealing with housing need.

Within the planning authorities' draft Local Development Frameworks and Core Strategies, affordable housing does feature as an issue in need of attention. However there are no specific plans to favour Community Land Trusts.

Alnwick's Core Strategy draft (2007) states that sites are to be developed with "an appropriate element of affordable housing". What constitutes an appropriate element is not detailed. In the secondary local needs centres (the smaller settlements) rural exception sites are favoured to provide 100% affordable housing when supported by an up to date housing needs survey. The rural exception policy means that planning permission may be considered on green field sites within or adjacent to such settlements. This housing must be available to people in local housing need, with the cost remaining affordable for the life of the property. The means by which this is achieved is not described, and could in theory be achieved through the Community Land Trust model, using section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, on planning obligations, to facilitate land transfer to communities, where appropriate.

Tynedale's Core Strategy (2006) states that of its villages, only those possessing adequate services will be considered for new housing developments. In this case adequate services refers to having at least:

- a school, or a shop selling food to meet day to day needs **and** either;

- a village hall/community centre or a pub;

There must also be a public transport connection to a larger settlement with a wider range of services. An appropriate element of affordable housing is to be applied to sites with 5 or more properties being developed. The exact proportion (between 30 % and 50 %) will be informed by an assessment of need in the local area.

Berwick upon Tweed's Core Strategy (2007) also aims to improve the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs. This is to be achieved through the use of cross subsidy in all new developments, inclusive of social rented and intermediate housing, with an emphasis on new flats and maisonettes. Perhaps most relevant to Northumberland National Park is the intention to promote the redevelopment of redundant agricultural land and buildings for the provision of affordable housing, whilst resisting the conversion of agricultural buildings to second and holiday homes.

In terms of the National Park itself, Local Authority housing and planning policy is less well developed than within the Ouseburn study area. In fact there is actually a policy vacuum while the National Park's Local Development Framework and Housing Strategy remain incomplete (indeed this research is helping to provide an evidence base for the Park Authority's LDF). Current working documents such as the National Park Authority Core Strategy align with the Regional Spatial Strategy, insisting that housing need is best served through new developments in service centre settlements - of which the Park has few. This could mean relieving local need through relocation to new developments in the larger gateway settlements, just beyond the Park's boundary. This move would enhance the possibility of affordable housing provision through the Rural Exception Policy. The Core Strategy goes on to suggest that any developments within settlements too small to be categorised as service centres should be affordable and subject to occupancy restrictions, thus serving those who need to live or work locally. This implies that community centred schemes (such as CLT's) could prove extremely important in the provision of any new affordable housing within the National Park.

The National Park core strategy (2006) also covers design of new development and stresses that this will be an important planning consideration. The potential problem with requiring high quality design, when attempting to provide affordable housing, is the possibility of greater initial costs. The Ouseburn case, being located in a Conservation Area, has a similar issue and indeed this will arise for most designated historic or scenic areas.

### *Obstacles for decision making*

There is no specific mention of CLTs within the Park's Core Strategy (2006), although there is a strong emphasis on providing affordable housing to meet local need. An interview with a Planning Officer for the Park Authority elicited the view that because the Park Authority is not a Housing Authority it is limited in its ability to deliver housing. However, as a Planning Authority, the officer said there would be planning support for approaches such as CLTs.

Whilst the availability of land is not perceived to be a significant barrier its acquisition and the subsequent development will inevitably incur substantial cost.

Interviews with CDT representatives unanimously reported the difficulty in accessing funds as the number one barrier in developing small scale affordable housing projects. It was firmly established that for community based schemes to become an attractive means of housing provision a more definitive funding application procedure would be required. Whether funds derive from European grants, the Regional Development Agencies, Local Authorities, The Housing Corporation or elsewhere was a subject that generated a variety of opinions from interviewees. From the county's most well known community led scheme on Holy Island, it is evident that grant funding from the Tudor Trust had been of vital importance. Unfortunately this substantial grant has not been repeated elsewhere in Northumberland.

Secondly, there was widespread recognition by interviewees that more collaboration and communication (or community cohesion) amongst individuals and organisations in the area was needed. This process would likely prove extremely beneficial in allowing new community trusts to initiate schemes by facilitating exchange of skills throughout the county. For example, experiences and knowledge exchange could provide invaluable assistance in simplifying housing issues and dealing with legal queries. This process would perhaps be best served through the possible umbrella organisation. As the interviewees unanimously agreed, it is very difficult for smaller communities to internally source the range of skills and expertise needed to manage housing projects. Any system or organisation assisting the acquisition of these resources may help to catalyse rural housing provision. There were still concerns, however, that although a large overarching organisation may be beneficial in drawing in funding and skills, and raising the profile of CLT's, it's size could also emasculate the emphasis on *local* action.

Owing to the vacillation surrounding the scale of a CLT it is difficult to justify which groups should be involved and how much influence they should hold. This difficulty is more often found in rural areas with a sparse and widely distributed population. In contrast the Ouseburn Valley area is quite well defined.

Uncertainty over current governance arrangements in Northumberland is also of importance. Northumberland's Local Authorities operating at the borough/district level are to be amalgamated through the formation of a unitary authority. The uncertainty surrounding how departments will operate and which individuals will emerge as important contacts mean that now is a difficult time for the National Park Authority to establish strong links and make decisions. There is also uncertainty regarding the future of the Federation of Northumberland Development Trust's affordable rural housing project, since no guarantees for continued funding exist beyond spring 2008. As the staff involved in this project have acted as rural housing enablers their loss could hinder formation of new trusts, as well as the progress of projects already established. The increased difficulty this may cause CDTs in terms of accessing necessary skills and resources would perhaps elevate the importance of establishing a CLT for the National Park.

#### *The potential for a Housing Association partner*

The study has revealed that some communities may wish to develop without the support of a HA. However, it has also shown that this is not a unanimous stance.

Communities in Bellingham and Allendale, like the Ouseburn, are both contemplating involvement with a HA as a means of harnessing experience and expertise.

A willing HA could prove an invaluable partner in taking forward a CLT within rural Northumberland, due to their expertise in affordable housing delivery. Available sites are likely to be small, however, and some perhaps too small to attract HA interest. The benefits of such a partnership could be particularly relevant to those within the National Park, where small and scattered communities would find it difficult to source the necessary technical expertise associated with housing and planning issues. The exact role a HA would play is something that may again be influenced by the scale of the CLT and the number of developments the Park Authority deems necessary. Any disadvantage of HA involvement is likely to relate to issues of control. Development Trust housing schemes in Northumberland to date have not involved a HA so there is no local experience to build on.

The progression of any such CLT is thus hinging on a number of factors and decisions during what is undoubtedly a dynamic period of change and uncertainty. The National Park Authority are making links where feasible (Landowners, existing CDT's, HA's etc) so that any policies detailed in the emerging LDF can be as informed as possible. This course of action should hopefully provide a foundation of relevant links and knowledge to prepare a delivery strategy flexible to the changes relating to local authorities and the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts.

## Conclusion

Communities in urban and rural areas are being affected by lack of affordable housing to the extent that many local communities feel the solution, in part at least, must come within their own control. An issue that is divisive for communities could become a vehicle for greater community cohesion through collective action in the form of CLT's.

Communities are struggling with the best approach to take. The dilemmas include whether to form a CLT as part of a CDT or in addition, whether to partner with a housing association (as with the Ouseburn case), and what type of housing to provide. Where no up to date housing needs survey exists and where "the community" is less easy to define (as in the National Park with its dependence on neighbouring areas) these issues are exacerbated. Live-work intermediate shared equity housing is being negotiated by the CDT in the Ouseburn, and social rented housing is the type most needed in the National Park. An umbrella CLT for the Park might take this forward but as yet there is no decision on an appropriate form of organisation.

Common to both case study areas is the priority given to quality design in new development given their status in planning policy. The consequent potential for this to impact on affordability must be taken into account in assessing funding required. Most important of all the dilemmas is how to obtain expert advice and funding, and this is likely to be a universal and central problem.

The complex and changing legislative and policy framework within which communities must work is a significant challenge. This was evident in both case studies, although the Park study perhaps illustrates a more confused local policy structure that is likely to be typical in many other National Parks.

Conclusions regarding outcomes at this stage can only be tentative, and to some degree speculative, as the communities concerned are at an early stage in the process of CLT housing delivery. There are, however, lessons on how communities can make progress when embarking on community owned and controlled housing projects. By identifying the barriers to making progress and working to overcome them, in a climate where potentially helpful political will and legislation is emerging, it appears that communities may be able to make a greater contribution towards affordable housing provision in the near future.

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